

## **Market Based Approaches Track**

### **Brownfields Redevelopment: A Win-Win for the Environment and the Economy**

## **Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Program US Environmental Protection Agency**

### **Problem**

According to a 1998 report by the periodical *Public Works Management & Policy*, more than 600,000 properties that were once used for industrial, manufacturing or other commercial use lie abandoned due to suspicions of hazardous substance contamination. This has created blight, joblessness, despair and fears about potential environmental liability so that developers, investors and lenders have hesitated to restore the land to productive use. The communities surrounding these impaired properties, often minorities and the disadvantaged watched helplessly, as these areas became havens for drug-related crime and illegal dumping. Property value declined, cities lost tax revenues and local residents felt alienated and far removed from the economic boom of other parts of the country.

### **Innovation**

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfields Program has revolutionized the way the Federal government manages the process of prevention, assessment, cleanup and redevelopment of contaminated property. The Brownfields Program reflects a new paradigm in environmental protection that is locally based, and forges strong public-private partnerships. Rather than the typical Federal approach, the program uses small amounts of seed money to spur communities to help themselves. The funding is used to remove environmental uncertainties and galvanize existing local creativity, state ingenuity, capitalism and free enterprise to leverage cleanup and redevelop funding. The program is unique because it seeks out private investment as an important source of funding to meet local goals. This innovative approach replaces hopelessness with community empowerment, increases local tax revenues, spares pristine greenspace from encroachment, and protects the environment.

### **Results**

- The program has funded more than 1,900 Brownfields site assessments to determine the true extent of contamination. Nearly 600 of these were deemed to have no cleanup required, instantly allowing their return to productive reuse.
- Because of these assessments, more than \$100 million in cleanup and more than \$2 billion in redevelopment funds have been leveraged; 6,400 new jobs have been created.
- In 1999 alone, Brownfields pilots removed contamination uncertainties from more than 1,360 properties and relieved developer fears to offer alternatives to building on pristine lands and greenspace.
- Focusing on more than 3,800 urban and rural properties, these efforts potentially affect the lives of more than 66 million residents, or 25 percent of the American public.

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